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relation. He makes it part of his flesh and blood; glories in it; was named after it; has it served up, on solemn occasions, with music and a hymn; as it was the other day at the royal city dinner:—

“Oh! the roast beef of old England;
And oh! the old English roast beef.”

“And oh!” observe; not merely “oh!” again; but “and” with it; as if, though the same piece of beef, it were also another;—another and the same;—cut and come again; making two of one, in order to express intensity and reduplication of satisfaction:—

“Oh! the roast beef of old England;
And oh! the old English roast beef.”

We beg to assure the reader, that a whole *TIMES* (Musical or Daily) might be written on this single point of the Christmas dinner; and “shall we be told” (as orators exclaim) “and this too in a British land,” that the subject is “*exhausted!!!*”

Then plum-pudding! What a word is that! How plump, and plump again! How round, and repeated, and plenipotential! (There are two *ps*, observe, in plenipotential, and so there are in plum-pudding. We love an exquisite fitness,—a might and wealth of adaptation.) Why, the whole round cheek of universal childhood is in the idea of plum-pudding: Ay, and the weight of manhood, and the plenitude of the majesty of city dames. Wealth itself is symbolised by the least of its fruity particles. “A plum” is a city fortune,—a million of money. He (the old boy, who has earned it)—

Puts in his thumb

videlicet, into his pocket,

And pulls out a plum,
And says, “What a ‘good man’ am I.”

Observe a little boy at a Christmas dinner, and his grandfather opposite him. What a world of secret similarity there is between them. How hope in one, and retrospection in the other, and appetite in both, meet over the same ground of pudding, and understand it to a nicety. How the senior banters the little boy on his third slice; and how the little boy thinks within himself, that he dines that day as well as the senior. How both look hot, and red, and smiling, and juvenile. How the little boy is conscious of the Christmas-box in his pocket; (of which, indeed, the grandfather jocosely puts him in mind); and how the grandfather is quite as conscious of the plum, or part of a plum, or whatever fraction it may be, in his own. How he incites the little boy to love money and good dinners all his life; and how determined the little boy is to abide by his advice,—with a secret addition in favor of holidays and marbles,—to which there is an analogy, in the senior’s mind, on the side of trips to Hastings, and a game at whist. Finally, the old gentleman

sees his own face in the pretty, smooth one of the child; and if the child is not best pleased at his proclamation of the likeness, (in truth, is horrified at it, and thinks it a sort of madness), yet nice observers, who have lived long enough to see the wonderful changes in people’s faces from youth to age, probably discern the thing well enough; and feel a movement of pathos at their hearts, in considering the world of trouble and emotion that is the causer of the changes. *That* old man’s face was once like that little boy’s! *That* little boy’s will be one day like that old man’s! What a thought to make us all love and respect one another, if not for our fine qualities, yet at least for the sorrow and trouble which we all go through!

Ay, and joy too! For all people have their joys as well as troubles, at one time or another; most likely both together, or in constant alternation; and the greater part of troubles are not the worst things in the world, but only graver forms of the requisite motion of the universe, or workings towards a better condition of things, the greater or less violent according as we can give them violence for violence, or respect them like awful but not ill-meaning gods, and entertain them with a rewarded patience. Grave thoughts, you will say, for Christmas. But no season has a greater right to grave thoughts, in passing; and for that very reason, no season has a greater right to let them pass, and recur to more light ones.

So a noble and merry season to you, my masters; and may we meet, thick and threefold, this time next year in these blithe albeit most thoughtful pages.

MEMOIR OF A CHORUS-SINGER.

THE life of the warrior, the pirate, or the bandit, if more romantic and eventful, is not more instructive, and self-honouring, than the “short and simple annals” of him, who, in the low and entangled paths of the world, has toiled on to that goal where we all meet, and whereafter we shall all be equal.

Few men, in staking the long odds with Fortune, ever threw so many low numbers as John Silverdew; and few men have evinced, throughout the game of life, more equanimity and even cheerfulness. The harmony of the moral elements was so kindly mingled with his being, that nothing seemed to jangle their sweet peal. His mother was a joyous-tempered woman; his father a melodramatic-minded man; and both were humble members of the theatrical profession. John Silverdew began to earn money for his parents while he was a babe in arms. He performed the part of a deserted infant in a forest, to be found by robbers, at a salary of sixpence a night,—and a shilling if he cried. John Silverdew was not born under a weeping planet: although, therefore, he was left in the forest every night, before he had had his supper, he never brought more than his sixpence to the family income. His next rise in the profession was to appear in the part of a winged imp, suspended from a wire; but one

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unlucky night the cord broke; and, as the laws of gravitation have never been reversed within the memory of man, poor John Silverdew became amenable to them; and the penalty he endured was a broken leg. His parents being too high (query, low?) spirited to send him to a hospital, the limb was never properly set; the consequence was, John limped to his grave. Had not this misfortune befallen him, he would, in all probability, have become a great pantomimic. Nature, and his own sweet humour, designed him to carry on the dynasty of Prince Grimaldi. The only complaint he was ever heard to make against this passage in his fate, was, that "if he had but broken his back too, he could have played Richard without stuffing."

His cheerful temper and quick faculties wrought upon the manager of the company, and he appointed him "call-boy," and servant of all work, as messenger-bearer, &c., at a salary of six shillings per week. At this period of his career he began to turn to account the harmony that was interwoven in his creation. He had music in his soul; he had music in his voice; and, to the surprise of all in the theatre, without knowing a note of music, he learned, and sang through, all the solos and choruses in *Macbeth*. Had he not been a cripple, here was a new source of profit opened to him; for his voice was a counter-tenor of rich quality and extensive compass. Nothing daunted, however, and nothing doubting, he determined to become a chorus-singer; and, having ingratiated himself with the band-leader, who taught him his gamut, in three months he was enabled to read with tolerable fluency the familiar choruses which are performed in societies and at festivals. His income had now swelled into the respectable magnitude of a guinea per week. He was an independent man, and he resolved upon confirming his independence by marriage. Don't laugh, you club-house haunTERS!—wait till the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, in which you shall say, "I have no pleasure in them;" when sympathy, and the communion of affection alone, will brighten the "sullen season" of life's evening. John Silverdew felt the want of a bosom friend: great as his self-resources were, he yearned for one to share them with him; and he married a girl in the company of dancers, whom, as a little boy, he nursed in a fever, and afterwards carried about in his arms. Communion in destitution and misery begets tenderness, and even love: and none are so kind to each other as the poor, because they are all at war with Fortune, and make common cause against privation. The poor have fellow-sympathies that the rich can never know: for the same reason that the soldier in "*Coriolanus*," with a profound instinct, preferred war to peace; because, said he, "Peace makes men hate each other; for the reason that they then less need one another."

John Silverdew had now a double motive for exertion, and he employed it to the uttermost. His useful accomplishments and punctual habits gained him engagements at all the provincial festivals, whither (to cover his miserable remuneration of four or five pounds) he always walked, carrying his provision in a wallet. A merry book was his constant companion. Tom Jones or *Don Quixote* has seasoned many a road-side meal of cold boiled bacon and hard eggs. He was never melancholy; but at these seasons he has been heard to say, that thoughts and visions have passed through his mind, which any one, in any station, might

envy. He has been seen eating a crust, and chuckling over "*Lazarillo de Tormes*."

His increasing gains, and his wife's salary, swelled their income into three guineas a week; and who was now so blest as John Silverdew? But this was his grand climacteric of prosperity. In the second year after his marriage, his mother was thrown destitute upon his hands; and he and his wife supported and comforted her: she with womanly sympathy; and he with his elasticity and cheerfulness.

The fourth year of their marriage saw his surviving parent laid in the bosom of our common Mother, and his beloved partner upon a sick bed. She had been seized by so severe a rheumatism that all her limbs had become collapsed, and she utterly helpless. Now it was that the disposition of the husband shone over his fortunes rainbow-like. The bright arch of Hope never swerved, never faded, so long as she remained with him. Again he was the boy-nurse, carrying her in his arms morning and evening, from and to her bed, sustaining her despair with his chirping tones, and even rallying jokes. It was not till the last prop was struck from under him that he so much as wavered. He saw his beloved wife carried to the grave, and he never but once was heard to sing again. The community of which he was so estimable a member, to which he had constantly contributed his services, and had never sought, or needed a requital, now came forward and joined their hard-earned pence to support him. All his friends saw that the sacrifice on their part would be short, and so it proved. He sank rapidly in a decline, and but a few hours before his death was heard murmuring in a low under-song his favourite melody from Mendelssohn's *St. Paul*, "*The Lord is mindful of his own*." He was evidently thinking of her who had gone before him, and whom (*hoping* to the last) he expected to join, where "tears are wiped away from all eyes."

C. C. C.

THE ROAST BEEF OF OLD ENGLAND.

THIS celebrated old national song was first printed on a single half sheet, with this title: "A Song in Praise of Old English Roast Beef. The Words and Musick by Mr. Leveridge." The copy bears no date, but it is conjectured to have appeared about 1720. The song consists of seven stanzas, commencing—

"When mighty Roast Beef was the Englishman's food,
It ennobled our hearts, and enriched our blood;
Our soldiers were brave, and our courtiers were good.
Oh! the Roast Beef of Old England:
And oh! for Old England's Roast Beef."

Fielding, in his comedy of *Don Quixote in England*, 1733, inserted a paraphrase of two of the stanzas, which was sung to the tune of "The Queen's old Courtier," the original of "The Old English Gentleman." Leveridge's tune, however, soon became popular, and many songs were written to it; one in praise of Old English Brown Beer long enjoyed a large share of public favor. Theophilus Forest, Hogarth's friend, wrote "*The Roast Beef Cantata*," illustrating the well-known picture of the "*Gate of Calais*." The version of "Roast Beef," introduced into this Cantata, is the cleverest song of the three:—

"As once on a time, a young frog, pert and vain,
Beheld a large ox grazing on the wide plain,
He boasted his size he could quickly attain.
Oh! the Roast Beef of Old England;
And oh! the Old English Roast Beef."

"Then eagerly stretching his weak little frame,
Mamma, who stood by, like a knowing old dame,
Cried 'Son, to attempt it you're surely to blame.'
Oh! the Roast Beef, &c."